

Smile, You’re With the PM and Your Train Isn’t on Time



Paul Koshy
29/Dec/2023 5 min read



To the blessed Railway Minister, the brief is clear. Millions visit railway stations every day. It is important to take political advantage of this captive crowd.



A selfie point at a Railway station. Photo: X/@Cryptic_Miind

Our nation has entrusted the Union government with the money collected from us through taxes and other levies. See how they spend the money.

The Central Railways is one of 19 zones of Indian Railways. It is headquartered in Mumbai, at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus. Recently, they replied to an RTI query.

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- ☐ It's informative and well-researched
- ☐ It's thought-provoking and insightful

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booths at a cost of RS 1.25 lakh each (a modest RS 40 lakh). This is essentially having a life-size 3D model of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (they also

have lower budget two-dimension life-size cutouts), props for people to stand beside Modi and take selfies with their phone cameras. Circulated on social media, this is designed to pep up the popularity of our beloved PM. These props also have texts and images that highlight some flagship schemes, programmes or achievements by national or state agencies, for which the government seeks credit.



मध्य रेल

CENTRAL RAILWAY

महाप्रबंधक कार्यालय, जनसूचना विभाग(मुख्यालय), छ.शि.ड., मुंबई 400 001

General Manager's Office, RTI Cell (HQ) CST, Mumbai - 400 001

No. CRAIL/R/E/23/03684, CRAIL/RT/23/01551, 01553
01562, 01570, 01575

Date: 21.12.2023

✓ Shri Ajay Basudev Bose,
House No. 38, Matru Chhaya,
Near Hanuman Mandir, Gopal Nagar,Badnera Road, Amravati,
Maharashtra, Pin-444706

Sub: Information under RTI Act, 2005.
Ref: Your RTI application dated 29.11.2023 /30.11.2023.

This has reference to your RTI application cited above wherein you have sought information related to 3D selfie booths or 3D selfie points installed or erected at various railway stations across Central Railway.

Sr.No.	Item	Remarks
1.	Names of stations across Crly where 3D selfie Booths or 3D selfie Points of PM Narendra Modi installed or erected.	<p>Mumbai Division: Temporary Installations: CSMT, KYN, GC, TNA, CLA, DI Permanent Installations :KJT,KSRA,LNL,IGP</p> <p>Bhusaval Division: Temporary Installations: NK,JL, MMR, AK, BAU, CSN Permanent Installations: BSL, AMI, SEG, KNW</p> <p>Nagpur Division: Temporary Installations: NGP,BETUL,WR,CD,PLO,DMN Permanent Installations: SEGM,BPQ,AJNI,AMLA</p> <p>Pune Division: Temporary Installations: PA, KOP,SVJR,KK,CCH, KRD Permanent Installations: STR,MRJ,HDP,SLI</p> <p>Solapur Division: Temporary Installations: SUR,KLBG, ANG,PVR,KWV,UMD Permanent Installations: LUR, SNSI, KPG, DD</p>
2	Amount spent or Cost incurred for erecting or installing each 3D Selfie Booths or Selfie Points of PM Narendra Modi across Railway station on Central Railway.	<p>Central Bureau of Communication has approved the L1 rates for 3D selfie/Photo Booths as under :</p> <p>For Category A stationsTemporary installation: Rs. 1,25,000 (exclusive taxes) for each installation.</p> <p>For Category C stations Permanent installations: 6,25,000 (exclusive taxes) for each installation.</p>

In case you are not satisfied with the above, appeal can be made to AGM/Appellate Authority at the address given below within 30 days from the receipt of this letter.

Additional General Manager & Appellate Authority, General Manager's Office,
Central Railway, CSMT, Mumbai- 400 001

21/12/2023

(Abhay Mishra)

Dy. General Manager/
Public Information Officer (HQ)

Selfie points in railway stations are obviously a national priority now. Rail accidents and the loss of lives, sadly, do not make the cut.

On June 2, 2023, there was a crash near Bahanaga railway station in Odisha's Balasore district involving the Coromandel Express, the Bengaluru-Howrah Superfast Express and a goods train, running on three separate tracks. The number of fatalities was never confirmed, but 300 people were seriously injured.

On January 13, 2022, 12 coaches of the Bikaner-Guwahati Express derailed in Alipurduar, West Bengal, leaving nine dead and 36 injured.

On August 23, 2017, nine coaches of the Delhi-bound Kaifiyat Express derailed

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On November 20, 2016, the Indore-Patna Express 19321 derailed near Pukhrayan in Kanpur, killing at least 150 and injuring more than that number.

On May 26, 2014, in the Sant Kabir Nagar area of Uttar Pradesh, the Gorakhdham Express collided with a halted goods train near Khalilabad station, resulting in 25 fatalities and leaving more than 50 injured.



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To the blessed Railway Minister, the brief is clear. Millions visit railway stations every day. It is important to take political advantage of this captive crowd, to generate optics to promote the persona of PM Modi and his “achievements”. In an aeroplane, the passengers are forced to listen to government propaganda. Full marks to the Ministry for Aviation. (Thankfully, though, the selfie booth has not yet found its way into the aisle space.) Why are the Railways lagging behind?

Priorities are made clear to the minister. The budget for improving rail safety, or to provide enough sleeper berths and seats for passengers, *can* be put into better use for much more nationalistic purposes, like erecting selfie booths to take pictures with Modi. I do not recall the expenditure head of selfie booths being spoken of in Parliament in the 2023 Budget session.

The state of Indian Railways, especially its deteriorating safety standards, is a terror, though it is the lifeline of our nation. But who cares? The minister’s boss will get happy only if he installs enough selfie points.

Who is spending money for this nonsense? Yes, it is you.

Who put their lives at risk by travelling on Indian Railways? It’s you.

Who goes through severe hardships to travel by train when the Railways reduce the number of non-AC sleeper berths to favour luxurious AC accommodation for the rich? Yes, right again, it’s you.

This government is without doubt a “suit-boot *ki sarkar*”. It serves *only* the rich, and government funds are used only to prop up an insecure and inadequate narcissistic personality.

Paul Koshy is a consultant in the infrastructure development and engineering sector.

This piece was first published on The India Cable – a premium newsletter from The Wire & Galileo Ideas – and has been updated and republished here. To subscribe to The India Cable, [click here](#).

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